Pulpit Preaching

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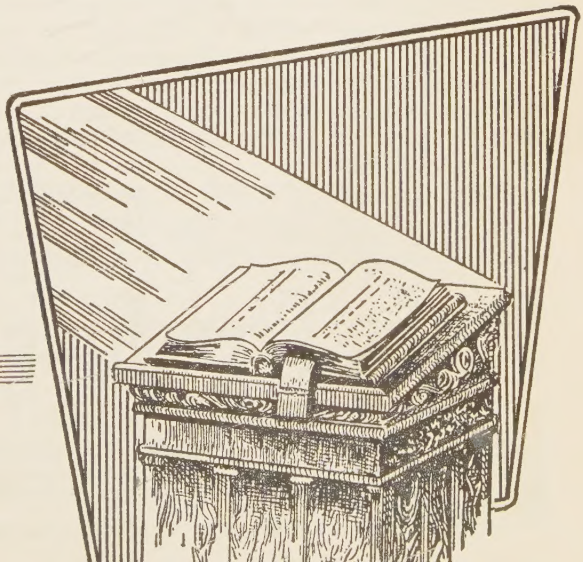

A PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL
FOR MINISTERS

Editorial Comments

This month's themes are related to the national elections of November and to the traditional season of Thanksgiving.

Next month's topics anticipate the season of the Nativity of Christ with the main emphases, "Advent Adventures" and "Season of Carols." The December themes will be "Profile of Christ" and "The Enjoyment of Life."

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Books For Pulpit Preaching

Entrusted with the Gospel, David A. MacLennan (Westminster Press, 128 pp., $2.)
Persuasive Preaching, Ronald E. Sleeth (Harper & Brothers, 96 pp., $1.75)
God in His World, Charles S. Duthie (Abingdon Press, 176 pp., $2.50)
Guests of God, John Frederick Jansen (Westminster Press, 109 pp., $2)
Living Can Be Exciting, Aaron N. Meckel (E. P. Dutton, 250 pp., $3.50)
The Gothic Cathedral, Otto von Simson (Pantheon Books, 307 pp., $6.50)
One Thousand Inspirational Things, comp. by Audrey Stone Morris (Hawthorn Books, 435 pp., $3.95)
Altars of the East, Lew Ayres (Doubleday & Co., 284 pp., $4.50)

Entrusted with the Gospel, the Warrack lectures on preaching at the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, is a brilliant and vital exposition of the calling and commission of the preacher, the heart of the Gospel, the spirit and methods of presentation, and the character of today's laymen and their need. The author, a preachers' preacher, enlivens and illuminates his thought with a wide range of illustrative matter . . . *Persuasive Preaching* is an important book, for the pastor's role as a persuader is presented in a thorough and a practical examination and in a manner which is both helpful and challenging. Ideas and techniques for claiming interest, the language of persuasion, and the use of reason and emotion are given distinctive attention by the author of this valuable little volume.

God in His World (with the sub-title, "A

(Continued on Page 15)

Worth Quoting

A wise old minister in the course of a long pastorate was accustomed to preach one sermon each year on the stars. One day a deacon took the dominie to task for this, asking him why he preached about a subject so far removed from the daily walks of life. To this the old minister replied: "It helps us in our walk down here to think about big things up there."

Ralph W. Sockman

* * * *

We should be thankful that we are alive, that we live in the United States of America, that we are capable of thought, of feeling, of action, that we can suffer as well as enjoy and achieve. We should be grateful for the heavy responsibility to all mankind that we must assume and discharge in the tremendous problems of peace. We should be thankful for Jesus, for what He was and is, for what He did and does, for the religious ideas and faith and practice which He inspired. But to be effective this thanksgiving must not be a shallow utterance of our lips: it must be a thanksgiving, an active expression of our faith by our works.

George A. Gay

* * * *

Prayer is a perfectly accurate instrument for grading the religious life of the soul. Did one only know how a man prays, and what he prays about, one would be able to see how much religion that man has. When a man, without any witnesses, speaks with his God, the soul stands unveiled before its Creator. What it has then to say shows quite distinctly how rich or how poor it is.

K. Girgensohn

* * * *

Prayer is neither black magic nor is it a form of demand note. Prayer is a relationship. The act of praying is more analogous to clearing away the underbrush which shuts out a view than it is to begging in the street. There are many different kinds of prayer. Yet all prayer has one basic purpose. We

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Pulpit Preaching

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Christian and His Politics

GENE E. BARTLETT, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California

A national election is almost here. Nearly hundred years ago another preacher expressed his concern, as an Englishman, when e wrote:

"Delicate and difficult as the introduction such a subject from the pulpit must be, t it seems to me the imperative duty of the inister of Christ, from which he cannot, xcept in cowardice, shrink, to endeavor to ake clear the Christian landmarks which elong to such an occurrence." It is about nose Christian landmarks that I want to peak. Is there any distinctive calling which s ours as citizens?

PRIVILEGE MEANS RESPONSIBILITY

First of all, the Christian will understand nat his citizenship is not only a privilege, ut it is a duty. Stated most bluntly, we must ote and vote as carefully as we know how.

A few years ago I saw the result of a vote tudy made in the city of Chicago. As exmples of the voting habits within the city he names of a hundred men and women rom each of several categories were checkd to see how faithfully they voted: Of the 00 clergymen of the Protestant faith who were selected, it was discovered that over a eriod of four years only 17 percent had nade use of their vote. Among laymen it was etter. Of the 100 laymen 29 percent had sed their vote. Among 100 women affiliated with civic clubs, 64 percent had voted. But ook at what follows: of 100 tavern keepers, 9 percent voted in every election; of 100 amblers and their employees, 97½ percent oted. The conclusion of the study is a raphic one, "This record is appalling and s an evidence of the way church people have hut themselves out of the voting situation."

The first mark of the Christian must be o confess with shame that often he has not seen that his privileges are also a responsiility. If you want to be of help to the forces of graft and greed; if you want to leave our ity, ultimately our nation, to those who have no interest but the promotion of themselves; f you want to give and assist vice and corruption, you don't have to turn a hand. All you have to do is just stay home. But don't think by staying home that you are not voting. The fact of it is your silence is a vote just as really as if you marked the ballot.

Whenever this matter is discussed sooner or later it comes out that we are all reluctant to make choices when none of the alternatives is perfect. We somehow feel that we cannot make what we must, a compromise, in order that the better may be served against the lesser. But, frankly, that is one way of escaping responsibility. We have to deal with the choices as they are, not as we wish they might be.

The first distinctive of the Christian in his citizenship is to use the gifts which have been won for him.

PRACTICE OF SELF-CRITICISM

Second, as Christians we ought always to stand for the practice of self-criticism. In a dictatorship criticism is always a sign of disloyalty. Not so in a democracy. Criticism and loyalty can go hand in hand.

Let us not overlook the Protestant influence upon our American democracy in this regard. In the early days of the Reformation when the conflict was most bitter there were some striking examples of this confidence in free and open exchange of ideas. There were, for example, those who urged Luther in Wittenberg to put down his opponents by force. We have the record of Luther's answer. It is a graphic statement of the democratic principle. He said: "I will preach it. I will talk about it. I will write about it, but I will not use force or compulsion with anyone. For faith must be of free will and unrestrained and accepted without compulsion. What we want is the heart and to win that we must preach the Gospel." Here is the Protestant principle as it has affected our democratic ways. It underlines the importance of free self-criticism.

I have such an abiding confidence in the power of a great democracy to see through open and free discussion, criticism and answer, all within the framework of a great loyalty. In fact, we have seen this happen

within recent years in America. A great and subtle movement of suspicion spread among us. It was a kind of attack and bitterness which could have disrupted America. But without setting aside one iota of our democratic processes, only to the contrary by letting all speak who would, we have seen that crisis through, and America has come to its sanity and its stability again. I would like to believe that Christians will carry a new and abiding faith in the power of people to make sound judgment when all sides of an issue have been heard. That I believe to be the second function we have in a democracy.

CONCERN FOR MINORITIES

The third is equally important. As Christians we must have a concern for minorities wherever they are. A common definition of democracy is that it is the rule of the majority. But this by itself is not the whole truth. And an even more distinctive mark is the respect and right of a minority to exist and to become the majority if it can. If we remember our commission as Christians, there will be many times when being a part of the majority we must still reach out to give a hand to minorities who need it. It is this ability to rise above your own special interest to the interest of those who have a deeper need which I believe is one of the works of Jesus Christ in the heart of a man or woman.

During the war there were some striking reminders of the dignity of this kind of concern. King Christian in Denmark lived up to his name both as king and Christian during the Nazi occupation of his country. When the decree went out that all Jews must wear a yellow arm band as an identification, the king appeared with the yellow band upon his sleeve, thus identifying himself with the persecuted minority. It will not come to us as dramatically. But we cannot escape the spirit which it reflects.

Here in America most of us who are Christian spring from persecuted minorities which found their way to these shores in the quest for freedom from persecution. We have a special commission to see that the words engraved upon the Statue of Liberty are never forgotten:

> Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shores,
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door

A NATION UNDER GOD

Finally, it is a distinctive task of Christians in a democracy to bring meaning to the phrase, "This nation under God." For all nations, ours included, are under God, under His protection but also under His judgment, under His love but also under His law. We can have either side of the will of God which we choose, but we cannot forget that no nation violates that moral law of God by which nations live or die.

It has been many years since a young idealist published a book on the life of John Huss. In his preface were the words: "As I prepare this little volume for printing, I cherish the hope it may arouse in the minds of its readers a hatred of every form of spiritual and secular tyranny." Later the writer of these words became disillusioned, gave up his idealism, and himself became the instigator of a cynical tryannic movement which came into power during the postwar years. As the second World War came to its close, that same man was hung by his heels in the square in Milan as a tyrant whose course was run. You see, Mussolini's earlier idealism was truer than his later cynicism. Freedom is greater than tyranny, and truth more powerful than falsehood. The very forces he deserted finally defeated him.

To speak of the "moral order" seems theoretical and vague. Actually it is the fundamental truth for which the church stands. Thus far all man's civilizations have broken themselves against the basic moral order which is at the heart of history. Possibly it always will be so; but certain it is that we are in the last days of our civilization unless there can be a revolutionary orientation of our total society toward the basic moral principals of human relationships.

Here, indeed, is a sober commission that leaps across all party lines or classes and all of the distinctions that we tend to make in human relationships, for we are all one in a nation that is under God. It is for us soberly, discretely, and humbly to proclaim from pulpit and class and by our public witness that in a time when men search for power, it is still true that the nation that "takes the sword shall perish by the sword," that "God is not mocked," that "whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap." We call it the moral law. We confess it every time we call this a nation under God.

Will you accept your calling as a Christian citizen? It means using your privileges responsibly, practicing self-criticism, sharing a concern for minorities, and proclaiming that this is always a nation under God.

The Kind of Leader America Needs Today

CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY, Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Penna.

Remember me, O my God, for good.— Nehemiah 13:31.

"Remember me, O my God, for good." That is the conclusion to one of the most remarkable pieces of autobiography ever written. The prayer of Nehemiah was answered. Today he is remembered "for good," for the integrity and heroism of his character, for his faith in God, for the good which he did to Jerusalem, to the people of God, to God's cause; and the good which he does today to all men who fear God and love righteousness.

Most of the great men of the Bible belong to certain well known groups: the patriarchs, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph; the prophets, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and Isaiah; and the priests, like Aaron and Eleazer; the great kings, like David, Solomon, Josiah and Hezekiah; and warrior leaders, like Joshua. Nehemiah belongs to none of these groups. He is not a patriarch, not a prophet, not a priest, not a king, not a soldier. He stands in a class by himself. One might call him the greatest layman of the Bible. As a civil governor he shows the immense influence that strong and godly men can exert upon their nation and their times.

Nehemiah was one of the captives in exile, not now in the kingdom of Babylon, but in its successor, the kingdom of Persia. Like Daniel, he had risen to a high post at the court of the long-handed despot of the world, Artaxerxes, the son of that Xerxes who is familiar to us in Greek history as the one who threw a bridge across the Hellespont, stormed the pass at Thermopylae, but was defeated in the battle at Salamis. He was cup bearer to the king, an office of great importance and dignity in an Oriental Kingdom. As the name implies, the cup bearer had to be a man of high moral character and integrity. He was also a chamberlain of the court.

WORDS OF SORROW

Josephus adds some interesting information to that which Nehemiah himself gives. He tells us that one evening Nehemiah was taking the air at the eventide on the walls of the palace at Shushan, looking down on the murmuring waters of the River Ulai, when he suddenly heard men speaking in the Hebrew tongue. If you have been a traveller in some remote, far-off land, where only one language is spoken, and that language one which you did not understand, and then suddenly heard men speaking your own tongue, their words fell like sweet music upon your ear. Nehemiah stopped and entered into conversation with these Hebrews. After the first greeting, he asked them about the state of Jerusalem and the colony which had gone up with Ezra thirteen years before. The answer he received filled him with sorrow, for he learned that the walls of the city were broken down, its gates burned with fire, and that the Jews at Jerusalem were in a desperate plight, much worse even than their compatriots who were in exile.

These tidings about the condition of Jerusalem brought poignant grief to Nehemiah, for he loved his nation and the city of David. In the prayer that he made to God, he confessed the sins of the people, how they had broken the commandments of God. But he also spoke to God the words which God had spoken to Israel through Moses in his farewell address. "If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations; but if ye turn unto me and keep my commandments and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from hence and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there." On the ground of this promise, Nehemiah asked God to restore and redeem His people.

NEHEMIAH'S OPPORTUNITY

It was not safe, even for one in so high a position as that of Nehemiah, to introduce matters of state to the king, Artaxerxes; and for several months, apparently, Nehemiah bided his time. But the king noted that when Nehemiah waited upon him, he was sorrowful and sad. One day he said to him, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart." This gave Nehemiah his opportunity. He told Artaxerxes why he was sad at heart, and when the king asked him what he could do for him under these circumstances, he asked the king to let him return to Jerusalem, and with letters of requisition upon the governors on the other side of the Euphrates for necessary supplies in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The compassionate king readily gave his consent, and with an escort of cavalry Nehemiah made the 1,500 mile journey down to Jerusalem.

He was there three days before he told anyone what he had in mind. At the end of the third day, he arose in the night, and, mounting his beast and taking a few men with him, made a circuit of the walls, in order that he might learn the worst about the defenses of the city. The next day he assembled the leaders of the people and said to them. "Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem that we be no more a reproach." This appeal stirred the courage and the patriotism of the people and they answered, "Let us rise and build."

ENCOUNTERING OPPOSITION

As soon as the work of re-building and restoration was commenced, Nehemiah began to encounter opposition from the tribes living in the territory around Jerusalem. This triumvirate of envy and opposition consisted of Sanballet, the Samaritan; Tobiah, the Ammonite; and Gesham, or Gashmu, the Arabian. Whoever attempts to rebuild the walls of a state or nation and drive out entrenched evil will always meet with opposition. The first weapon which the enemies of Nehemiah used was ridicule and mockery. Gathering about the place on the wall where the Jews were at work, they said, "What do these feeble Jews? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? What kind of a wall is this? If even a fox prowling by night should step on it, the wall would collapse." But Nehemiah and his men went on with their work. "So we built the wall," was the music with which they did their labor.

Then this triumvirate of opposition planned to stop the operations of Nehemiah by force of arms. But Nehemiah answered by arming all his workmen. While half of the men toiled on the walls with the hammer and the trowel, the other half held the spear, the shield and the bow.

Seeing that the Jews were prepared to resist force with force, the enemies of Nehemiah had no taste for conflict or attack. Instead of that, they changed their tactics and tried to entice Nehemiah to come without the walls and enter into a conference wtih them. "Come now," they said, "and let us reason together." But Nehemiah answered, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down."

WEAPON OF SLANDER

Next his enemies hurled at Nehemiah the very dangerous weapon of slander. One of them came into the city holding in his hand an open letter, the inference being that others had read the letter and were well acquainted with its contents. "It is reported," it said, "among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel, for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king." This was a most dangerous charge. The very breadth of it had often been sufficient to cost a Persan governor his head. But Nehemiah did not permit this slander to turn him aside from his great undertaking.

The next and last attempt of Nehemiah's enemies was to frighten him into the temple. A renegade prophet came to him and told him that on that very night there would be an attempt to assassinate him, and urged him to take sanctuary in the temple, knowing full well that if Nehemiah left the walls and went into the temple, the work would stop. But to this proposition Nehemiah made his noble answer, "I will not go in. Should such a man as I flee?"

Thus the work went on; and in the incredibly short time of fifty-two days the wall was finished; and all the gates, too—the sheep gate, the dung gate, the fish gate, the fountain gate, and the dragon gate, were set up. "So we finished the wall."

SPIRITUAL BUILDING

But Nehemiah knew that Jerusalem must have other walls than those of stone. Our cities need more than noble buildings. They need moral and spiritual building. Nehemiah knew that was true of Jerusalem. He, therefore, called out of retirement his great predecessor and contemporary, Ezra the Scribe. When all the people were assembled together, Ezra mounted the pulpit. This is the first mention of the pulpit in history. Standing in the pulpit, he read to the people the law of God, the law of Moses; and as he read it the Levites explained the meaning to the people. After several days of this reading and exhortation the people confessed their sins; and, like the Covenanters of Scotland, signed a solemn league and covenant of their allegiance unto God.

This done, the wall and its gates were consecrated and dedicated. The people were formed into two divisions, one led by Ezra and the other by Nehemiah. Marching along the top of the wall from different directions, they met near the temple area. There they gav thanks to God and rejoiced with great joy. Such, in brief, is the story of this great layman and civil governor, Nehemiah. The ruling traits of his character were compas-

sion and sympathy for his people, indomitable courage, incorruptible integrity and honesty, and faith in God. Today America needs, perhaps more than at any other time in its history, a leader of the stature of Nehemiah.

A MAN WHO CARES

Nehemiah was a man who cared. He was secure in his high post with its rich emoluments in the world empire of Persia. When he heard the tidings about the lamentable plight of Jerusalem, he might have said to himself, "This is too bad, but what can I do about it? My future, my destiny, is here in Persia." But Nehemiah was not that kind of a Jew. Instead of that, he was the kind who would say, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember not thee above my chief joy."

We need today men who care about the state of our nation. We are imperilled from indifference and complacency on the part of the people. There are too many who do not care and are unconcerned about the moral condition of our country, as long as we have prosperity, and as long as good wages are paid, and good dividends come in. But if none cares, the nation will go down.

There are conditions in our land which call for grief and prayer on the part of those who love their nation and their fellow man, a grief and prayer like that of Nehemiah when he first heard of, and then saw for himself, the terrible plight of Jerusalem.

Those who signed the Declaration of Independence said that in the support of that Declaration they pledged their "lives, fortunes and sacred honor." I wonder what those builders of our nation would think of our conception today of "sacred honor"? We talk constantly of new things today—New Deals, New Theology, and new standards. But what we need most of all is some of those old things which have been tried and tested through the ages—the old virtue of thrift, of honesty, of honor in office, of faith in God.

A MAN OF COURAGE

When his enemies tried to intimidate Nehemiah and frighten him by the malicious slander that he was planning to revolt against Artaxerxes, the King of Persia, and set up for himself, Nehemiah scorned the accusation and denounced it for what it was—a wicked lie. Again, when his enemies sent an emissary, a renegade prophet, to tell him that his life was in immediate danger, and that he ought to come down from the wall and take refuge in the Temple, Nehemiah gave his grand answer, "Should such a man as I flee?" We need today men who have the courage to stand—what they will have to stand if they are going to stand with God and right—ridicule, threats and slander. We need men who fear God, and not man.

HONEST AND INCORRUPTIBLE MEN

Graft and dishonesty in public office are nothing new. Even leaders of the people in Jerusalem, and when the heroic leadership of Nehemiah was lifting the city and the nation out of its misery and shame, were guilty of dishonesty and bribery and extortion. They were selling their brothers into slavery for debts, and were making the poor eat bread mildewed with their tears. Commenting on that, Nehemiah in this great autobiography said, "This did not I because I feared the Lord." To put himself above such suspicion, Nehemiah took no salary. He refused to use the office of governor for personal profit, because of his fear of God and his love of the nation. We need a revival today of that idea which was publicized in our nation by Grover Cleveland, the President who splendidly overcame the transgression of his youth, and proved to be one of our strongest executives. What he said, and what he practiced too, was this: "Public office is a public trust." What would our country be like today, if all men in places of public responsibility and high office were ruled by the fear of God?

A MAN OF FAITH AND PRAYER

We need today not only men who have the moral character of Nehemiah, his courage, his integrity, his sympathy for his fellow men, but also men who have his faith in God. Our greatest need as a nation today is a great God-fearing, moral leader, for "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waiteth but in vain."

On the courthouse of Cuyahoga County at Cleveland, Ohio, are inscribed these words: "Obedience to Law is Liberty." Recently, one of the judges pointed out that there is a significant omission in the inscription. It comes from Richard Hooker, the 16th Century author and stylist, and

what Hooker wrote was this, "Obedience to *Divine* Law is Liberty."

God makes a Bible out of history. It is a Bible that he who runs may read; and the Bible declares that the nation which forgets God shall be cast into Hell. When we have obedience to Divine Law, then the ramparts which we watch shall be safe.

The Law of Liberty

EVERETT W. PALMER, First Methodist Church, Glendale, California

I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts. — Psalm 119:45
If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. — John 8:36.

Hunger for freedom is a chain of fire linking the souls of men together around the world. Here and there it may smoulder from neglect or repression, but it never goes out. Now and again it will blaze up from what looked to be ashes, sweeping tyrants from their thrones, changing the destiny of nations, writing new chapters in the human story.

Love for freedom! The first man was born with it. The last man will die with it.

But how do we translate such desire into achievement? How do we get freedom—and keep it? Perhaps no question is generating more heat and less light in American life today.

FREEDOM'S PARADOX

The fundamental answer is found in a paradox. To be free we cannot be free. In other words, freedom is the fruit of obedience to law, the harvest of discipline. "I will walk at liberty," said the ancient poet of Israel, "for I seek thy precepts." He found freedom, not through following the lure of his own desires, but in obedience to higher law.

Some time ago when visiting the office of a high school principal, I saw in large print, framed and hanging in a prominent place, this quotation: "Liberty is not the right to do what you choose; it is the responsibility of choosing to do what is right." Observing me taking note of it he said, "I have it placed there for a special reason. On occasion students are sent here who need to sit and reflect upon the meaning of those words."

Those two statements point the road to freedom. They declare the law of liberty.

They teach a hard lesson. Everyone wants to be free. But how difficult it is to learn the freedom we want comes only through the discipline of obedience to law higher than our own whims. It is a paradox—to be free, we cannot be free.

Though this principle seems confusing and opaque in theory, it is plain as daylight in practice. We see its truth demonstrated everywhere.

My first introduction to California came by way of Cornelius Wammerdam. Years ago the stellar track event of the East Coast was staged each June at famed Palmer Stadium of Princeton University. I shall never forget watching that mighty son of California winning the pole vault.

He was leaping to what then seemed to be incredible heights of 15 feet and more. But never did he give the impression of strain or tension. He ran with an easy, flowing grace and soared over the high bar with the ease, it seemed, of a feather tossed by the wind. To see him clearing 15 feet, six inches was to think, "Hmm, how easily he does it." You caught yourself thinking anyone could, even yourself. Always that tall, blonde, broad-shouldered and likeable son of California impressed you with the easy grace and freedom of his efforts.

But, of course, there was another side to Cornelius Wammerdam and his world record jumping which the crowds did not see. It was his long and tedious months and years of painstaking training, his program of disciplined living.

His freedom in leaping to world record heights was the product of disciplined obedience to law. Even so we gain the freedom called "skill" in any physical endeavor.

CHARACTER AND CONDUCT

This principle applies no less to character and personal conduct. Sometime ago a human derelict came in to see me. He was dirty, ragged and partially drunk.

"I'm not a bum," he whimpered. "I'm a college man. I graduated from college. I know better than this. I have a wife and two children. I want to go home and begin over again."

We went into my study and there on the floor we knelt down together and prayed, he slobbering and crying, I trying to help him become aware of God's presence and take

hold on God's redeeming power. What a pathetic wretch he was. He had been born to be free. He wanted to be free. But back yonder he had taken the wrong road. He had thought freedom was found in breaking moral law, ignoring the "precepts of God," escaping their restraints and demand for self-discipline. And what he believed would be freedom made him a slave.

Jesus Christ was the freest man in history: Freest from the shackles of self-centered living; freest from bondage to unworthy habits of thought or conduct; freest from the confusion, defeat, and remorse of sin; freest to become all that man is born to attain in joy, strength and nobility of life. He was the freest person who ever lived because he most obeyed the disciplines of moral law.

"Liberty is not the right to do what you choose; it is the responsibility of choosing to do what is right."

"I will walk at liberty, because I seek thy precepts."

All human experience since the time of Adam and Eve to the last prisoner who was booked in the county jail this morning is proof of that.

WAY OF OBEDIENCE

Do we want freedom? Then we must enter the strait gate and walk the narrow way of obedience to the discipline of moral law.

This principle is no less true in life shared as members of a community, a nation, and of the world of nations.

When some of us came to church it would have been more convenient had we been at liberty to park our car in the middle of the street directly in front of the Narthex. But after several others had followed our example, then hundreds of other people would no longer be free to use Kenwood Street. So conceivably traffic might back up and block Wilson and Broadway. Thus freedom of movement would be denied multitudes bound for this church and other churches of the neighborhood. And what is more, when we would go out to our conveniently parked car, we would be so hemmed in by other driverless cars, that we would miss our Sunday dinner. We have freedom to use the streets only as we and our neighbors obey its traffic laws.

Similarly, the political, religious and personal freedoms we celebrate exist only through obedience to laws of our land.

The way to freedom, whether in the realm of physical endeavor, character and personal conduct, social and community life, or in any other category of human living is entered only through the strait gate of obedience to moral law. To be free we cannot be free. Paradox it be, this is fundamental, indubitable, redemptive truth.

RIGHT KIND OF LAW

But now we have come to a most important decision. Not all law when obeyed leads to freedom. For instance, it is conceivable that Cornelius Wammerdam, under poor coaching, could have followed rules which would have made him awkward and lacking in stamina. Or, a person may choose to govern himself by rules of righteousness which would cause goodness in him to die of sterility and make him as offensive to the cause of religion as the law-enslaved Pharisees Jesus sought to deliver. Likewise, a nation may be governed by laws which are the steel bars and jailer's whip of tyranny. Communist Russia lives in obedience to law, but who would say such law leads to liberty?

Only obedience to the right kind of law yields the precious fruit of freedom. The stupendous claim of the Christian religion is that in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ is plainly revealed law whose obedience brings people to the freedom for which they were born and deeply desire. "If (Jesus Christ) the son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." This is the jubilant testimony of those who built the foundations of the Christian Church and wrote the New Testament.

Their claim does not rest upon pretty thoughts and fancy rhetoric. It is founded upon certain great facts of experience, facts tested and proved true by millions of intelligent and earnest people from the time of Jesus to the present. Here are the facts concerning those who live in obedience to the spirit and wisdom of Jesus:

1. They live in harmony with the laws of the universe, both physical and moral.

2. They find their finite strength and wisdom mightily reenforced by a source of Infinite strength and wisdom, namely God.

3. Their own vital energy is unified, released and directed toward life's noblest goals. They have the freedom which comes when captured by a commanding purpose. They are helped to live at their best whether in creative thought, religious practice, social conduct or daily toil.

4. They enjoy harmonious and mutually helpful relations with other people. They are

the peace-makers, the ministers of reconciliation among mankind.

5. They are the constant and untiring enemies of all that degrades, hurts, and enslaves the souls and bodies of men. They are the resolute, indomitable, unceasing champions of all that enobles, redeems and liberates mankind.

To have and to share such values is to have and to bestow freedom—the liberty men were born to attain. Who would deny that? Christ, then, is the perfect law of liberty.

Here, then, is the gist of the matter, truth to write in our hearts: "Liberty is found only through obedience to law, such law as the spirit and wisdom of Jesus reveal."

LAW OF CHRIST

Now, briefly, let us apply this truth. We in America celebrate the rational conviction and brave endeavor by which our fathers established these United States of America and ordained that they should be a land of the free. We believe the institutions of freedom they founded are a political expression of Christianity, the law of Christ. We celebrate freedom of speech, freedom to dissent, freedom of press, freedom of worship, freedom to petition, freedom to assemble, freedom from unwarranted seizure and arrest. We celebrate the right to trial by jury, to confront and cross-examine our accusers, to be regarded innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. We celebrate protection from trial by accusation, to protection from those who would destroy our reputation by slander and false accusation.

These are "laws of liberty." Unless they are obeyed, freedom dies.

The great danger in America today is not that some alien power will take away our traditional freedom, but that we shall fritter them away through ignorance and fear.

We may lose our freedoms through ignorance of the requirements for freedom, the laws of liberty. As Thomas Chalmers, in his significant book, *The Republic and the Person*, points out, it is the duty of education, and I would add, of the Church, to help each generation reperceive the rational and moral grounds for our patriotic slogans and dogmas of freedom. Otherwise we may drift into practices of tyranny unawares, permitting unwise or unscrupulous leaders to pervert and destroy our free society while professing to defend it.

One of the most famous ships in that most loathsome and terrible business, the slave trade, bore the name "Jesus." Year in and year out it cruised with its cargo of misery and terror under the name "Jesus." Even so, the great and noble ship of freedom, known as "the United States of America," may come to the ignoble and tragic end of being—"transport for tyranny."

MAKING FREEDOM POSSIBLE

It is not enough merely to be opposed to Communism, pagan tyranny that it is. Hitler was opposed to Communism, as was Mussolini and the military clique of Japan. Of course, as Christians we stand opposed to the evil of Communism. But most of all we must be for freedom. We must understand what makes freedom possible. Otherwise, in ignorance, we may cease to obey the laws which make possible freedom, thus losing it. And, in ignorance, we may permit unwise leaders to burn down our house of freedom as a means of eliminating termites.

Also, we may lose our freedom through fear. The practices of tyranny have survived through the generations because they appear to be a more safe and secure way. Freedom is dangerous. Hence, free men always are tempted to abandon it. Anyone can inherit freedom. Only the brave keep it. So there are those who now, in fear, would have us abandon practices of freedom as a means of safety and protection.

Henry Steele Commager has pointed to this peril: "The danger that confronts us, then, is graver by far than any danger that arises from the activities of Communists or subversives in America. The American system is strong enough to stand competition from Communism or any other ism. The American people are intelligent enough to resist subversive doctrines. Only at our peril may we depart from those traditions of freedom of thought, speech, inquiry, and communication which have carried us triumphantly through the vicissitudes of the past and brought us to our present proud position.

"Since the conquest of Greece by Rome, history has frequently recorded instances where the vanquished have imposed their ideas upon the victors. Will history record that the great American democracy, at the moment of its greatest triumph and its greatest strength, yielded to the thought-control technic of the Japanese, the intolerance of the Nazis, the police-state psychology of the Russians?"

Let us pray God to give us the wisdom

and courage needed for keeping the spirit and intent of the Declaration of Independence alive and up-to-date. Let us dedicate our lives anew that the institutions of freedom established by our fathers in obedience to the law of Christ may continue thus in our times. Let us set our wills anew, God being our helper, for obedience to the law of liberty, even as we know it in Jesus Christ.

A Vote for God

ARMIN C. OLDSEN, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lakeville, Ohio

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. — Psalm 33:12.

A select group of the children of Israel had returned to Jerusalem from the exile in Babylon. With high hopes and enthusiasm they had begun to rebuild their once proud and beloved city, which had long been lying in ruins. Rubble had been cleared away; houses had been put up. But the most important part of the reconstruction had been neglected. The chief purpose for their return to the land of their fathers seemingly had been forgotten. The temple had not been rebuilt. They had worked hard to provide shelter for their bodies, but the building of a house of worship for their souls had been postponed indefinitely. Man does not live by bread alone. A society does not prosper merely because it builds beautiful houses. Crops had failed; business was poor; everyone was discouraged. Their fundamental need was spiritual. The temple would have to be rebuilt.

Notice how strikingly God described their lot through the Prophet Haggai: "You have sown much, and you bring in little; you eat, but have not enough; you drink, but you are not satisfied; you clothe yourself, but no one is warm; he that earns wages earns wages to put into a bag of holes." Then God immediately spoke of the source of their trouble and offered a solution for their sorry plight. A house of worship would have to be put up. "Consider your ways," He said. "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified." That challenge of God aroused the people and they set to work. Jerusalem, reconstructed from the ruins of war, finally had a place for God.

TODAY'S PROBLEMS

Every nation in the world, even though business may be good, prosperity high, and crops excellent, is today facing tremendous problems. When the people are unhappy and insecure the government is one of the first to be blamed for their troubles, often with some justification, in some countries in furtive whispers, here in America in banner headlines and coast-to-coast broadcasts. Kings are dethroned, dictators are eventually overthrown, members of the governing body are voted out of office.

Infinitely more important than the kind of government that is in power in a country is the character of those who are subjects of the government. I find nothing in my Bible—nor in history—to indicate that a nation is blessed simply because it is governed by a king, or by the rich, or by the laboring class, or by the people themselves. I find nothing in my Bible to indicate that a nation is blessed because it has won a war, or has a large army, or is enjoying prosperity on borrowed money. But I do know that there is a passage in the Thirty-third Psalm which says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." That is to say "Blessed is the nation whose rulers and whose people are consecrated worshipers of the true God." Every nation in the world, be it large or small, weak or powerful, can be so blessed.

When a citizen in a democracy, or in a monarchy, or in a dictatorship, becomes guilty of a crime against society, don't blame the kind of government under which he lives, but blame the kind of soul that lives in him. When a man with light skin color commits murder and a man with dark skin color commits murder, the fault lies not with the texture of their skin but with the quality of their character. When a student with high academic degrees mercifully helps a blind man across the street and another person, less generously gifted intellectually and with no formal education, helps the same blind man across the street a block later, their kindness is not an evidence of good training of the mind or lack of it, but it is an evidence of good training of the heart.

INEVITABLE DISASTER

All history supports the Bible declaration that when a nation ignores or even defies God it will inevitably meet with disaster. The forces that destroy a nation or a civilization are godless forces. There are inescapable evi-

dences of that truth all around us. Some of the hardest strokes of heaven have fallen and will fall on those nations whose god is power and empire and material prosperity at any price. God is not finished with atheistic Soviet Russia and He has not pronounced His final word on our country. He will speak and it will hurt. He has begun to speak and the sound of His voice in modern history is rumbling like thunder telling of a coming storm.

It is most unfortunate when a Christian Church becomes identified with a certain political party. It is most regrettable when Christianity is regarded as being synonymous with a particular form of government, as Christianity and democracy are sometimes spoken of as being one and the same. The Christian Church must never become involved in civic and political activities which rightfully belong to other organizations, but it must never forget that in preparing men for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven they are making of them better citizens of the country in which they live.

A Christian obeys the laws of the land, even those he does not like, unless they interfere with his God-given duties. A Christian takes part, to the best of his time and ability, in activities which make his community, his country, his world a better place in which to live and he is willing to do far more for his country and for the welfare of humanity than any law demands of him. A Christian will serve in government as he has opportunity and will demonstrate his Christian faith, no matter what the obstacles, by supporting the principles of integrity and brotherly love, by placing the welfare of his country above the welfare of his party, by putting the good of all men ahead of selfish interests. A Christian will take an active interest in government so that he can vote intelligently. Some seemingly do not care who is in office, nor what happens to certain classes and groups, or for that matter even to the country, as long as their personal lot for the next year or so will be comfortable.

CHRISTIAN DUTY

A Christian will do all he rightfully can to put into office and to retain in office men and women who are god-fearing, who want to serve people rather than politics, who think more of honesty than of prestige, who do not abuse their office for selfish gain—be it money, influential friends, popularity, or even a prominent place in history. Brains, experience, and statesmanship are not enough for a ruler of the people or for a good public official. He must fear God; he must obey God's law; he must love his neighbors, every one of them, if he is to help make his a nation blessed by God. Every one who governs must realize that the example of his public and private life can be a great influence for good or evil in shaping the lives of those who observe them. Often great characters in history like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are remembered because of outstanding leadership when their country needed it. Yet far more important has often been the force they exerted in shaping the attitudes of a country, or of nations, or in developing the character of many in succeeding generations. When a leader is not a dignified individual who has respect for the fundamental distinction between right and wrong in his personal behavior, even in his choice of language and in his treatment of things that are sacred, he ought to know that his example can seriously offset all the good done by a consecrated teacher of history who tries to instill in the pupils a wholesome love of country and of world welfare and by the teacher of Bible truths who seeks to develop in his listeners habits of good Christian living.

A Christian does not ask of the leaders of his country special privileges and benefits but rather a promotion of the welfare of all men and all classes and honest, sincere, and wise direction in how best to perform his duty to his country. A Christian encourages godliness in the leaders of his country. How ready practically all of us are to criticize any action on the part of public officials that does not agree with our own views and wishes and how slow and negligent we are in praising and supporting them when they do what is right rather than what is merely expedient. Terrible criticism is leveled at people who are in public life also by those who could not for a moment carry such responsibility themselves. We have a way of begging good people to take on positions of heavy responsibility and then immediately proceeding to make their lot an intolerable one. It often embitters them and makes them less efficient in carrying out the great work that is theirs. Men and women in public office are bound to make mistakes; that is no reason for regarding them as traitors and criminals.

On Wednesday morning we shall know who is elected. Having prayed that God may help us elect wisely, we ought all to be mature enough and American enough—and Christian enough—not to indulge in childish bitterness because our candidate or party did

not win. The president will have the weight of the world on his shoulders; he may have a tremendous influence on all future history. He will need our prayers, our encouragement, and the support of our Christian lives. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." Let God in Christ control our lives. Let us work together with zeal and devotion to make our country Christian and God will bless America.

Heritage and Honor

ROBERT E. GOODRICH, JR., First Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas

There are some verses in the Bible we like to remember, but there are also some we would like to forget. We would like to forget them because they create a disturbing suspicion down inside us that maybe we won't get by with some things. "Be sure your sins will find you out!" "Whatsoever ye sow that shall ye reap!"

In this category of verses we would like to forget may belong the verse, "To whom much is given of him much shall be required." It is the last part of it that bothers us. "To whom much is given." That is all right. We like to think of receiving much. But the suggestion that whoever receives is under a burden of accountability for the blessings that come to him, that is disturbing.

Walter Underwood has told about an address by Bishop Watkins. He started out by saying, "I wouldn't be a millionaire! I wouldn't take a million dollars if you were to give it to me because I simply don't want the responsibility that would go with having a million dollars." Perhaps somebody on the cynical side would say, "I would hate to offer the Bishop a million dollars." Nevertheless, I think we can grasp the Bishop's idea. Receiving is nice, but responsibility can be a burden.

But I believe that this is a law of life as surely as is the law of harvest. Failure to observe it can have tragic consequences. It produces "swamp men" and "swamp women." You know what a swamp is. The water flows in but nothing flows out. It becomes stagnant and diseased and dirty. That is an accurate picture of the person to whom much comes, many of the best things of life, a wondrous heritage from here and there. But it stands still and underneath the surface of that life for all its outward appearance, you can often find a miserable heart and a diseased spirit. It's a law of life: to whom much is given, much will be required.

SENSE OF HONOR

It isn't only a matter of gratitude, although when the grace of gratitude is absent from a life it usually results in a very ugly person. A sense of honor is involved, because God doesn't intend that his privileges or blessings or gifts shall "dead-end" in your life or mine. He intends us to use them and protect them and develop them and hand them on.

Dr. Ralph Sockman tells of an incident of the 1948 Olympic games in London. The relay races were on and the French team had started well. Two of its runners had completed their course, but as they handed the baton to the third man, he dropped it. He flung himself on the ground. With his hands to his head in dispair and tears in his eyes, he openly cried. A few minutes later when they led him out of the arena, he was still weeping. Is that any way to take defeat? Is that what was involved when he dropped the baton. There were the French people, the French team, his own compatriots, there were the two team members who had run quite well before him, and there was the runner who was to come after him who never had a chance to run at all. All this was involved because he dropped the baton, failed to pass it on.

This has a striking parallel in life, not in theory but in fact. "To whom much is given of him much will be required."

How much we are involved is apparent when you think of our heritage of freedom. There are millions of people in the world today who would give everything they have in exchange for what we woke up with this morning! But have you stopped to think about it any today? Isn't it amazing how we just take this heritage of freedom for granted? But ask one of the men who came out of the Communist prison camps and is but recently back on these shores. I imagine he would say that the most incredible thing to him is the matter-of-fact way in which America takes its freedom.

Of course, during the war we were a little more conscious of it. It has to do with a lot of little things, you know, and somebody wrote a description of freedom in these words: "Freedom is a man sitting on his front porch smoking his pipe before he goes to bed at night. It is the righteous anger of the pulpit. It is the violence of an argument

outside an election poll. Freedom is the unafraid faces of people looking out the window of a train that speeds across the continent. Freedom is Lindbergh's appeasing voice raised above a thousand hisses. Freedom is Westbrook Pegler telling the Roosevelts how to raise their children. Freedom is the Roosevelts letting them raise themselves. Freedom is you trying to remember the words of the 'Star Spangled Banner.' Freedom is the lack of apprehension at the sound of approaching footsteps outside the door. Freedom is all the things you feel and cannot help feeling."

But we had better divest ourselves of any idea that freedom is something you can tie up in a package, or tie up in a constitution and hand on, or any idea that it is a self-perpetuating privilege. There is a sense in which freedom must be discovered, won, and deserved by every generation. This is the only way it can be handed on. And it involves the discovery and the confirmation of the faith out of which freedom comes.

LINK WITH ETERNITY

It does come out of faith! President Eisenhower said not long ago, "You can't describe free government in any other terms but religious." Freedom doesn't come only out of faith in man. In fact, there is a pretty good argument for the proposition that man isn't capable of being free and doesn't know what to do with his freedom. Look at the record of history: the unending wars and rumors of wars, the mad tyrants, the power-mad rulers, the inhumanity of man to man. Look at the record! Look at any day's newspaper and you can wonder if man is capable of freedom.

Freedom doesn't come out of anything man deserves on a physical or moral plane. Man isn't very good until you look at him in the light of his creation as a child of God. If man is made in the image of God, that's a different matter. He has a link with eternity. There are possibilities within him and maybe he deserves to be free. Unless this faith is preserved in us, unless we practice some of the principles and assume the responsibilities of it in day to day living, then freedom cannot live!

It isn't just by chance that the Community Chest idea—community sharing and community caring—did not arise in Moscow, but in America. Men who are in slavery feel no obligation voluntarily to take care of each other. That is a mark of free men. And whoever takes this heritage of freedom then and seeks to escape the responsibility of caring for his fellow men, that person strikes a blow at freedom. And all the world looks on. The heritage of freedom must be deserved, discovered and won by each generation.

Or, take the heritage of this Christian faith. The picture of the relay race is particularly fitting here. It has been handed to us and we hand it on, or it doesn't go on. Somebody said that we are only one generation away from a truly Christian nation. By the same token, we are always just one generation from paganism. That can be proved by the record in many a family, for there are literally millions of boys and girls in America today growing up as thorough-going pagans. They might as well be growing up in Pango Pango.

In the days when I used to play golf, I remember a little caddy I had one day. We were walking along together, probably looking for a ball, and he asked me what I did. I told him that I was a preacher, a minister. He looked quizzical and didn't seem to understand. And I said, "You know what a minister is, don't you?" He thought a minute before answering, "Yeh, I think I do. I saw a movie one time that had a preacher in it!" And that was his closest connection with the church and all of Christianity—a movie in which he had seen something about a preacher. There are millions of children like him.

But often it was *not* true of their parents. They had a faith passed on to them, but it has perished within them. Only one generation from great Christians to thorough-going pagans! And what is true in a family can be true of a nation.

REPRESENTATIVES OF FAITH

There is no guarantee that a generation from today we will be Christians. Nothing guarantees it except the sense of honor which you and I may have toward our heritage. You see, we may know a lot of things about Christianity: we may know it is the best news the world ever received, our hope of beginning again, our place of forgiveness. We may know it is the one light which shines in the darkness which is death. We may be be acquainted with the fact that at the center of it stands the tremendous fact of the incarnation—a great assertion about God but also a great assertion about man, saying that the very nature of God is such that he can take on this human flesh and become one with us in Jesus Christ. We may know that this says something about the dignity of persons and promises a power and a stability and a security that can come from no other place. But the question is, are we the kind of persons who are good representatives of that

faith? Does it live in us? Have we tried to tell the news to others by every means and medium at our disposal?

I will never forget the day that I found a little girl. I was looking out of the window one day and there she walked along the sidewalk—about two years old, barefooted, bare backed, in fact bare everything! As I saw her going toward a busy intersection, I was afraid she was going across the street so I ran out and called to her. I asked her where she was going and she pointed aimlessly in many different directions. And then I said, "What is your name?" And there wasn't any answer. "Where is your home?" She made a complete circle as she pointed. I persuaded her to come into the yard, and I got in the car and started an ever-widening circle of the neighborhood to find where she belonged. Finally, over six blocks away, across six busy streets, I came to a block in which there were a lot of people on the street. You could see the anxious expression on their faces as they were looking for something—or someone. Nobody had to point out to me the mother. You could see that. I'll never forget the look on her face when I said, "I have found your little girl and she is quite safe." Nor will I ever forget the thrill of taking the little lost girl back home again.

There is a thrill comparable to that in finding persons—boys and girls and men and women—and taking them "home" again, as it were, to the stability and security and power of this Christian faith. I wonder if there is somebody who will never have a chance because of us. "To whom much is given much will be required."

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Continued from page 2

Living Theology to Strengthen Personal Evangelism") was written "for the Christian who seeks to express his faith in an outreaching concern for others." Christian evangelism is placed in the context of the modern world and is founded upon the development of great spiritual bases. Evangelism is shown to be an outgrowth of a sound theological understanding of God.

Twenty-one splendid meditations are in *Guests of God,* a stimulating and warm volume which will give new perspectives and interpretations to the Communion message. The author, who is professor of religion at Hanover College, shows a keenly sensitive understanding of the meanings inherent in the Last Supper and its relevance to spiritual living. The meditations fall into three divisions: The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The Communion of Saints, and Self-Examination.

Dr. Meckel, pastor of St. Petersburg's First Congregational Church, in *Living Can Be Exciting* goes beyond "positive thinking" to offer a Christian basis for rewarding Christian life. There is a friendly intimacy in his handling of ninteen significant topics: temperance, grief, death, laughter, handicaps, worry, marriage, faith, among others.

The Gothic Cathedral is a handsome and admirable book which includes many color plates and illustrations. "The cathedral was designed as an image, and was meant to be understood as one. It remains quite true that ecclesiastical architecture represents the reality of which it is a symbol or image in a manner that differs radically from that of painting or sculpture . . . The origins of Gothic, perhaps the most creative achievement in the history of Western architecture, can only be understood as the singularly sensitive response of artistic form to the theological vision of the twelfth century."

One Thousand Inspirational Things includes a generous number of familiar narratives, essays, poems and quotations, arranged imaginatively and tastefully and made useful to the pastor with indexes . . . *Altars of the East* records the experiences encountered in the author's 40,000 mile spiritual pilgrimage through the Far East and Near East. Through a sympathetic observation of the religious practices of many peoples, the author hopes to bridge the distances between East and West and to point to new avenues for the establishment of permanent peace. Many photographs accompany this appealing book.

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WORTH QUOTING

Continued from page 2

pray not to get something, but to open up a two-way street between us and God, so that we and others may inwardly become something.

John Heuss

* * * *

During World War II the rations on one of our ships became rather low and there wasn't much of a change in the monotony of the meals. The chaplain noted the continued discontent of the men in regard to the food. One day he both startled them and brought to their minds a new sense of appreciation

when he changed the words of the usual blessing by saying: "The weather is rough, the meat is tough, but thank the Lord we've got enough."

Frank A. Court

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"Where is the dwelling of God?"

This was the question with which the Rabbi of Kotzk surprised a number of learned men who happened to be visiting him. They laughed at him: "What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world full of his glory?"

Then he answered his own question: "God dwells wherever man lets him in."

Martin Buber

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In the darkest hour of a nation's history, men turn instinctively to God. And that nation is blessed, which has known God through the bright hours and knows to Whom to turn in distress. Dr. Ronald Allen of Manchester, England, told an American, John W. Rustin, to such a crisis in the life of his people. "You can never get the common people of England to believe that a miracle did not take place at Dunkirk. England regained her soul at Dunkirk."

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The story is told of an old missionary who spoke for some time on a radio program about the glorious history of missions in Japan, the work in churches, schools and hospitals, the present opportunity for the spread of the gospel in Japan. When he finished another old man was given the chance to speak. He ridiculed the missionary, climaxing his remarks by saying: "I don't know anything about missions and I don't care a rap about them." The old missionary had a few words more. They were as follows, spoken with gentleness and compassion: "If I knew as little about Christian missions as this gentleman, I wouldn't believe in them either!"

Kenneth Kohler

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Vision! Emotion! Action! That's Christ's "Big Three" for evangelism and missions. We can see it for ourselves in Matthew 9:35-38. "He saw the multitudes"—there is vision. "He was moved with compassion"—there is emotion. "He went about all the cities and villages"—there is action. It takes sight to give us sympathy. Sympathy, aroused, stimulates service.

Paul S. Rees

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We grow in Christlikeness slowly and silently. Each day there is a little improvement. Today we may not be much of a Christian, but ten years from now a much better Christian, and at the end of life's span, saintly. It is a daily growth by inches not by yards. Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*." When Paul talks about his personal repentance, he says, "I die *daily*." In the New Testament, the early Christians are described as meeting in their homes to break bread and pray *daily*. They went up to the temple to worship *daily*. It is that day by day living with Christ, living in Christ, and living for Christ that results eventually in reaching the fullness of stature in Christ.

J. R. Brokhoff

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Once there was a pig which was lamenting his lack of popularity. He complained to the cow that people were always talking about the cow's gentleness and kind eyes. He admitted that the cow gave milk and cream, but he pointed out that pigs gave bacon and ham, and that people even pickled their feet. So the pig demanded the reason for what he considered such a lack of appreciation. The cow thought a while and then said: "Maybe it's because I give while I'm still living."

Ruby H. Thomas

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If you know not whether the world be God's world, determine that you will do your part to make it God-like and lo! in the end, if not yet, you will find God in it. Such faith comes not to the indifferent or indolent, to him who merely looks on. It is a faith to be won, not to be received as a gift. It belongs in highest measure only to heroic souls who dare to venture everything.

Arthur C. McGiffert

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Several years ago I was in St. Peter's looking at the great building which is Christendom's largest church. One almost feels lost in the vast expanse of that enormous structure and one's perspective and judgment is not as accurate as it would be in a smaller building. Looking from a great distance I found myself studying what appeared to be some lovely and very large paintings, yet I could not be too sure whether it was painting or not. Then walking closer I discovered these beautiful murals had been done in mosaic and done so skillfully that it appeared they were paintings. Each stone was placed so exactly that its identity was lost in the whole design. I wonder if God's way of doing things is not like that. We are not all sup-

posed to be alike in this life. We are all supposed to be true to our conviction and ideas of life. But as we are true to these ideals the Great Designer places each spiritual tile in its rightful place and the intended picture is created thereby.

Charles R. Bell, Jr.

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There is no religion which throws off the burden of life so completely, which escapes so swiftly from sad moods, which gives so large a scope for the high spirits of the soul, and welcomes to its bosom with so warm an embrace those things of beauty which are a joy forever (as Christianity).

L. P. Jacks

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In the Old McGuffey's Reader, there is the story about the clock that had been running for a long, long time on the mantelpiece. One day the clock began to think about how many times during the year ahead he would have to tick. He counted up the seconds; there would be 31,536,000 seconds in the year; the old clock just got too tired and said, "I can't do it," and stopped right there. When somebody came along and reminded the clock he did not have to tick the 31,536,000 seconds all at one time, but just had to tick them one second at a time, he began to run again and everything was all right.

Nenien C. McPherson, Jr.

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He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much; who has gained respect of intelligent men; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who has left the world better than he found it; who has always looked for the best in others, and given the best he had; whose life was an inspiration — whose memory, a benediction.

B. A. Standley

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In a discussion with a very good friend recently about having a definite and deep religious conviction and experience, he quoted the following from a publication, *L'Aurore,* by French Canadian pastors: "A Christian is a person who is able to communicate his Christianity to another so that this other will in turn communicate it to others."

Charles W. Taylor

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Give the best you have received from the past to the best that you may come to know in the future . . . Accept life daily not as a cup to be drained but as a chalice to be filled with whatsoever things are honest, pure, lovely and of good report . . . Making a living is best undertaken as a part of the more important business of making a life . . . Every now and again take a good look at something not made with hands: a mountain, a star, a turn of a stream. There will come to you wisdom and patience and solace, and, above all, the assurance that you are not alone in the world.

Sidney Lovett

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Nurses tell me that in children's wards over the beds is often to be seen the sign "L.T.C." Those letters sound like the designation of some of the landing craft used in war. But "L.T.C." in the hospital stands for the words, "Loving Tender Care." Such care is sort of the landing craft by which babies are landed on the shore of life.

Ralph W. Sockman

LOWELL M. ATKINSON
J. R. BROKHOFF
ENSWORTH REISNER
FRANK A. COURT

Giving Thanks in Good Times

LOWELL M. ATKINSON, First Methodist Church, Englewood, New Jersey

Thanksgiving does not have to be just another observance. Rather it can be a life-changing experience! We can be different and better persons as we enter into the spirit of Thanksgiving in such a way that we are linked with fresh power to God. We can find our spirits enlarged, our minds broadened, our soul-life deepened, as we begin to think thoughts of gratefulness, unselfishness, considerateness and kindliness that reflect the goodness of God to us.

In our days, things are good. We are living in a time when our nation is more prosperous than any nation has been in the history of mankind. I think it would be a hardy soul, indeed, who would say, however, that we are happier than any nation has been in the history of mankind. Something deeper, something greater, something more is needed to make a human being content, satisfied and happy than to tabulate and enumerate benefits and blessings that have come to him. We have many of them, and so has many a spoiled child. Surrounded by things given to him, he is restless, bored and troublesome to himself and everybody else. Just to receive things and count them is not enough. It is not the secret of Thanksgiving.

> Were thanks for every gift expressed
> Each day would be Thanksgiving
> Were gratitude its very best
> Each life would be Thanks-living.

If we truly sensed the magnitude of the blessings that are ours, Thanksgiving wouldn't be one day a year; it would be every day a year. And if gratitude expanded to its proper dimensions, life itself would be required to live out the thankfulness, the gratitude, the humble devotion, we feel because of the goodness of God. Each life would be Thanks-living! Something of this is involved in the Bible's admonition to "bless the Lord, O my soul." That is, whole-heartedly and with all your being, to link yourself to God, happily to thank him for himself and for what he has meant to you and to the world, and to rejoice in the salvation that he has given to you and to all who believe in him. This it is to come to the central meaning of Thanksgiving.

In the seventeenth century, the religious poet, George Herbert, put all this in a single line:

> O Lord, Thou hast given us so much, give us this one thing more, a grateful heart.

The person with a grateful heart is the person who is living in large terms. This is the person who is finding the secret of happiness and contentment in life, who is escaping the tedium and the restlessness that characterize so many people who receive so many evidences of the bounty of God in their experience, but who do not properly give thanks for these things.

RIGHT ATTITUDE

Norman Vincent Peale has a catch phrase which I think helps us, "the attitude of gratitude." The word attitude is a big word. It sums up for us a multitude of individual choices and decisions. To have an attitude of gratitude is not to give thanks occasionally or once in a long while; it is to give thanks at all times and in all things and unceasingly, so that on every occasion of giving thanks, you develop an attitude of gratitude. And when Thanksgiving comes, it simply gives dramatic expression to something which is in your life every day, because you are Thanks-living, in a spirit of open-hearted and wholesome and healthy devotion to your God, knowing that he has given to your life everything of significance in it. On Thanksgiving we may very well ask ourselves if we are really cultivating the attitude of gratitude. Like character, it has to be built up through numberless decisions for good, through numberless decisions of faith, through times of the uplifted heart praying, till at last you have the habit, the attitude of thankfulness and gratitude.

Now although we are living in good days, we recognize that even in good days there are bad days, and outward prosperity does not exempt us from the crises of life. There are certain things that represent tragedy and heartbreak, that come to everybody. And while we may for a while so cushion ourselves against the unpleasant and the unde-

rable that we forget their existence, and hile we may perhaps unprepare ourselves o face these dire experiences when they ome, nevertheless, they do come. There *are* ad days—days of bereavement, days of sor- ow, days when illness gives us limits for our ctivities, days when there are catastrophes r tragedies or untoward happenings. Just s it seems that our weather is getting more iolent and freakish these days, when we ink we know more about it than ever be- ore; just as in a century when we talk bout peace more than ever before, we have he worst wars of all times; so it is only onest to admit that in days of very great rosperity we must be prepared for the leak and the stark and the dark aspects of ife—they will break in upon us. And yet we ust bless the Lord whole-heartedly and ive thanks always and in all things and at ll times, if we follow the Biblical admoni- ion—if we live this large spiritual way. ut how?

AMERICAN TRADITION

Then we think of our own tradition of the American Thanksgiving. You see how that an instruct us. I need not recount for you he historical facts, but simply to point up heir meaning. How dark that background! How everything seemed to go wrong for his band of young men who came to an un- nown land. They came to the wrong desti- nation. They were hoping to disembark on he southern coast of this land. Instead they ame to a northern coast just in the midst f winter. They were not united among them- elves; there was a threat of anarchy which nade necessary the Mayflower Compact. The whole enterprise threatened to fall apart rom inner disunion. There was the threat f Indians; they had known of this danger efore they left Holland. You remember that when they sailed, they sailed in two ships, ot one; and the one ship, ironically named Speedwell," did not speed well, but, on the ontrary, threatened to go to the bottom and o had to be taken back into port. The conse- uence was that the Mayflower was over- oaded and overcrowded, and it was a tiny hip. I would be surprised if there were not people in this congregation who had gone fishing in boats that were larger than the Mayflower. It was less than 100 feet long, and about 20 feet in breadth. In a great storm at sea, the main beam of the ship cracked, and it seemed as if that little ship were going to plunge straight to the bottom. Governor Bradford (upon whose "Journal" we rely heavily for the facts) tells us that after having a council about their desperate situation, "They resolved to commit themselves to the will of God and proceed." That spirit of thankfulness was in their heart all the while. While the ship is breaking apart and the storm is raging, the spirit of thankfulness is there and it gives them courage and heart, and they resolve to commit themselves to the will of God and proceed. Looking back upon some of these dark experiences, Bradford said very simply, "It is not with us as with men whom small things can discourage." They were thankful because they were literally full of thanks for their God.

There was that terrible winter, the first winter in the new land, when about half of their number died. They built more graves than houses. And then came the first Thanksgiving at harvest time in 1621. That Thanksgiving was not just an occasion of praise unique in their experience; it was a very simple and normal expression of a thankfulness which was in their spiritual life all the while. In all things they were blessing the Lord and giving thanks and forgetting not his benefits. These things required vision and courage and enterprise and daring and hardihood, and God gave these blessings when they were required. And what can you say about Squanto? Here are the adventurers landing in their long boat on Cape Cod, hardly knowing where they are, in danger of starving, in danger of freezing, needing the ordinary things of life. An Indian, appearing out of nowhere, has no desire to kill them, but only to help them. Not only that, but he speaks English and understands it! There is quite a story in back of Squanto, but here is the interpretation that Governor Bradford put upon them, "He was sent of God!" Once again they could give thanks. Actually their mishap in coming to New England instead of some other coast probably saved them from extinction, for the Indians in Massachusetts at that time were the most friendly Indians on the Eastern seaboard. Some of this sense of the guidance, and providence, and goodness of God was in their hearts and in their minds all the while. And that is the reason we have a Thanksgiving.

PERMANENT EXPERIENCE

And unless we have that type of thankfulness in our spirits all the while, unless we make Thanksgiving a permanent experience, the occasional observance doesn't mean very much, does it? The Pilgrims taught us how to give thanks in dark days and to make those days luminous and bright with a

glorious meaning that comes into life when we are closely linked to God, when our Thanksgiving is really Thanks-living.

What can we say, then, about the good days, when blessings are heaped upon us, when we have material bounty, when business is good and money is circulating and we can shop a little more easily than we used to be able to? What can we say about these good days? I think this, that we must not forget his benefits.

I have my own private theory about why we like wild west stories. In these comparatively comfortable and luxurious days, when we are constantly tempted to take things for granted, it does us good to be reminded of a time when the things that contributed to the ongoing of life could not be taken for granted. We like to think of the times when a drink of water was achieved at great hazard; when a journey to the next town was made at the risk of life itself; when it made every difference in the world whether that little cloud of dust on the horizon betokened friend or foe; when you could not be sure that the property that was yours would remain yours because someone might steal it; when you had to be prepared to defend your liberty and your possessions. Something of the tang of real adventure is stirred up by these stories of a day when you could not take things for granted. And is this not the cause of much spiritual numbness today, that we take things for granted, forget from whose hand we have the benefits and bounties of life, find ourselves increasingly distant from the source of all our good? Far from remembering God and blessing him with all our soul for these benefits, we begin to think that "by mine own hand I have gotten me this wealth." The admonition in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy warns us lest, when we have eaten and are full and have experienced the benefits and bounties of life, we forget that they all come from God!

BUNDLE OF LIFE

The only real blessing of life is for us to be bound closely to God and knit to Him in the bundle of life. "Forget not all his benefits." For his benefits are bigger than the things that we enjoy which make life comfortable and convenient. His blessings are the things that we enjoy which make life comfortable and convenient. His blessings are the things that enlarge the mind and expand the soul and give life true dimension and height and depth and breadth, yes, even to eternity.

Now there is one way we can surely lose all the benefits of Thanksgiving, and that is to fail to pass them on. Some time ago I read an article that just about changed my life. It was a very simple thing; it will not come as anything new to you. A man told of the difference it had made in his life when he began to give expression to his spirit of thankfulness, whenever he had the opportunity. If there was some good he saw in somebody, he said or did something about it. If there was some occasion to express gratitude, he expressed it. If in some way he could say a word of encouragement or write it, he did. Often when pressing and urgent business seemed to be demanding every second of his time, he put these things to one side to write a note of friendly encouragement that wasn't really necessary and which he did not really have to do at all. But cultivating this attitude of gratitude, this spirit of thankfulness and appreciation made him a bigger and better person. It has helped me, too; and it can help you!

Some tourists in Ireland came upon a little girl carrying a very heavy burden, and they offered her some help. When they were parting, she thanked them and said, "I cannot repay you for your kindness, but I can pass it on." We can never repay God for his kindness to us, but we can pass it on. And if this spirit of thankfulness gets into our hearts and minds and wills, so that we begin to live it out and pass on the kindness and goodness of God to others, don't you see that it will create a new world? The hard, self-centered type of life will be broken and there will be kindliness and thoughtfulness everywhere! Let us cultivate this attitude of gratitude until Thanksgiving becomes really Thanks-living, and we shall bless the Lord with all our souls, and not forget his benefits.

The Peril of Plenty

J. R. BROKHOFF, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte, North Carolina

Israel is a luxuriant vine that yieldsits fruit. The more his fruit increased the more altars he built. — Hosea 10:1.

But when they had fed to the full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me. — Hosea 13:6.

From human experience we know that it is possible to be too good to people. We can

e too good to our children, relatives, employees, and friends. We "spoil" them. By onstant hand-outs we do something to their ntegrity. They cease to be grateful and ven come to the point when they expect elp.

If it is possible for us to be too good to eople, is it possible that God could be too ood to us Americans? Think for a moment f what our country was about 300 years go. There was not a house to live in, not a oad to travel on, not a field cleared for a arden, not a bridge over even the smallest tream. There was nothing but a wilderness nd warlike natives. Yet, over these years God has blessed America with increasing prosperity so that today America can boast f having the highest standard of living in he world. God has been so good to this ountry that never before in human history as a nation been as wealthy or powerful. Has this been good for us? As we become more and more wealthy, have we lost our ense of gratitude? Are we taking our lessings for granted and more or less expecting that God ought to be good to us? Could there be peril in our plenty? That is he question that disturbs us this Thanksgiving day.

America today is very much like Israel f Hosea's day. He said, "Israel is a luxurant vine." That is America all over again! It has the luxury of plenty. We are enjoying peak prosperity. Our earnings are at heir highest in history. Our national income as climbed. Our employment is also at its eak. No longer do we have lines of poor eople waiting to be fed. No more is it necssary for men to hunt jobs month after month. There is a job waiting for anyone who wants work. Moreover, wages are higher this year than ever.

WEALTH OF KINGS

America is a luxuriant vine in terms of possession, comforts, and conveniences. Today an average person in America is living amid the wealth of kings. During the past 10 years the standard of living has increased 25 percent. Fifty-nine percent of Americans own homes, 60 percent own a TV set, 70 percent own an auto, and 98 percent have electricity. Our prosperity is seen when a certain auto dealer advertises: buy one car and buy back the one traded for just $1. Years ago as a boy I thought we had reached the height of prosperity when a clothing store sold an extra suit of clothing for $1. Now we have so many things that giving has become a problem. A cartoon recently showed two women looking at a gift catalogue entitled: "Gift Suggestions for the Man who has Everything." There was a time when the average congregation was busy filling and distributing Thanksgiving baskets that some poor families would have a decent meal. Now the average congregation is hard put to find a family in such circumstances.

The luxuriant vine of America has given us plenty of food. In fact, more food than we can use. Once again our fields and orchards have yielded most abundantly. We now have machinery, better fertilizer and insecticides, and hybrid seeds. But dare we forget that if it were not for God's good rain, the right climate, and the warm sunshine that this food would not be available? Our Thanksgiving meal will be a sample of this largess. Our tables will be laden with all kinds of good food, and in wonderful quantities. As we face it, we will want to pray like the man who was suddenly called to say grace: "Dear God, make us able to eat all the food before us." While we Americans will sit before a laden table, let us remember that millions of others would be glad for just one piece of bread and would be delighted to have only one drumstick from the turkey. How then can we be thankful without sharing? Perhaps we ought to pray: "God, forgive us for our surpluses."

There then is the plenty God has given us from his good and gracious hands. In the face of this, are we thankful? Has this abundance forced us to acknowledge God as the Giver? The answer is a sad "no." Rather our abundance has given us Americans a headache. We are like the man who has overeaten. He is most uncomfortable. Our plenty has become a problem.

Our problem has become political. One party is embarrassed by God's plentiful gifts, for they are asking, "Who can be against prosperity? What can we offer Americans for their votes more than they already have?" Also, there is an international problem connected with our plenty. The United States has seven billion dollars' worth of surplus food stored away. Our State Department officials tell us we cannot give it away or sell it at cut prices because it would ruin the world's food market. The other nations would complain that we glutted the market and caused a collapse of prices. This would make America more hated than she now is. Consequently we keep our abundance stored up at a price costing Americans millions per day.

Our plenty at this Thanksgiving time

may be a problem for us. As such, we can hardly be thankful for what God has given us. Perhaps, God has been too good to us.

On the economic side our plenty may be a problem, but looking at it spiritually this very plenty may be a peril. Hosea pointed this out in our text. As a luxuriant vine, America is "filled." What happens to a "filled" people? Hosea says they build altars to false gods. Instead of thanking the true God of plenty, we make gods out of the plenty. We worship created things rather than the Creator.

FALSE ALTARS

One of the altars we Americans have built and before which we worship is materialism. God's abundance has made us materialistic. The Marxists are devoted to a philosophy of materialism. To them true values are materialistic. But we Americans have outdone the Marxists though we supposedly follow a moral philosophy of life. Now our emphasis is continually and increasingly placed upon things. And the more we have, the more we want. We have an insatiable appetite for more of this world's goods. We cannot be satisfied. Consequently we claim that true greatness has a price label. The man is most successful who drives the most expensive car, lives in the largest house, and has accumulated the highest amount of stocks and bonds. We forget that the peril of materialism is, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Another altar we have erected is the altar of pleasure. Thanksgiving Day was set aside for church attendance when public thanks would be offered to God. But what has become of our present Thanksgiving Day? You must agree, if you are fair, that it has become a day of pleasure: a football game, or a parade, or a pleasure trip to a family reunion.

The peril of plenty, in the second place, is in the fact brought out by Hosea in the text: a filled people lift up their hearts in pride. Seeing our plenty we congratulate ourselves on what we have accomplished. We gain a sense of self-sufficiency. Look what we have done! Look what we have manufactured! As travelers go across our country, they report that they notice an absence of humility. The American people have become so proud that they are congratulating God for taking on his side a people so enterprising and successful.

O man, where did you get the physical strength to do your work? Where did you get the mental capacity to figure out your mechanical devices and your inventions? Who made the natural resources which you use in your factories? Come to your senses! Be honest and see that God is the author of every good gift. He gives us the strength of hand and the power of mind that we know are essential to material progress. Acknowledge God as the giver of all you are and all you have.

This pride should be a warning to America. The Bible says, "Pride goeth before a fall." If Americans continue in their attitude of self-congratulation and taking to themselves the honor due to God, the fall of America is certain.

FORGETTING GOD

Third, the peril of plenty is in forgetting God. Hosea, speaking for God, says about a "filled" people, "They forgot me." If all of this goodness abounds in ever increasing quantities, how could we ever forget God? That indeed is a mystery. But we do. It is a paradox. The more we have the less grateful; the less we have, the more grateful to God. When our national Thanksgiving began, the Puritans had almost nothing for which to be thankful. They had barely enough to get through the winter. An angry sea separated them from their old homes and country. A wilderness and a cold climate stared them in the face. Yet, they felt that things could be worse. They felt a need to be grateful for what God in his mercy found fit to send them. If our Puritan fathers with so little could feel this way about Thanksgiving, how much more should we with so much, feel that we need to give thanks? The tragedy is that we have gifts, but we forget the Giver.

In Hosea's day, Israel was a luxuriant vine. The country was blessed with peace and prosperity. An abundance of everything was enjoyed. They had plenty of everything. But what happened to Israel? Israel was given poverty in place of prosperity. The luxuriant vine became withered. The people were scattered. Th nation's capital was left in ashes. The nation was destroyed. Why? Because when the people were filled, they built altars to false gods, lifted up their hearts in pride, and forgot God.

America is Israel in the twentieth century. It is a luxuriant vine of plenty, Today we face the peril of plenty. If we continue to follow Israel's mistakes, our days are numbered. The handwriting is already on the wall. Let America take heed. Her future is at stake. The nation with a future is a people with grateful hearts.

The Use of Thanks

ENSWORTH REISNER, First Methodist Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

As ye therefore received Christ so walk ye in him . . . abounding therein with thanksgiving. — Colossians 2:6-7.

There are some people who seem to have a round, ruddy glow of everlasting optimism. Oddly enough fortune does seem to smile upon them. On the other hand, there are some of us who always see the gloomy side of our earthly lot. We, too, are confirmed in our pessimism by our misfortunes.

A certain bishop was called upon by a younger minister of unusual ability who complained to the bishop that the cabinet had been unfair to him and had not given him an opportunity equal to that of one of his less brilliant colleagues. Said the young man, "I'm just as good a preacher as Brother Jones, in fact better. I have ability to organize the program of the church from top to bottom but, Bishop, I never get the breaks, and Brother Jones does." The bishop had a sad twinkle in his eye, as if he hoped that the younger man would discover the wisdom of his words, for he said: "My dear brother, you have judged rightly in saying that you have gotten no breaks and Brother Jones has. But with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged." The gloomy, critical, pessimistic person does not get the same breaks as the optimist and, in spite of his ability, if his judgment is directed toward wearing down he will be torn down by his judgment while a less able man will go far ahead of him on the contagion of optimism.

In these days when people pride themselves in being realists who can face the hard, bitter facts of life, we are frequently assailed by a mood of pessimism until we judge all of life by our own pessimistic outlook. In so doing, however, we are only seeking to protect ourselves from disappointment. We are like the youngster who comes home saying that he knows he has flunked in examinations when actually he secretly hopes that he got an A. All his words of pessimism are only blankets against the raw winds of disappointment. The glum prophets of doom are afraid to hope because they cannot stand the pangs of disappointment. But it is far, far better to be a disappointed optimist than a confirmed pessimist.

THE RELIGIOUS PESSIMIST

Particularly is that true in our religious life. The pessimist in religion is absorbed with sin and damnation. His face is long and dour. He sees a threat to morality in every gay gesture. He is sure that the communists are overrunning the country and the government is going to the dogs; that business is going to collapse; that the church is spending too much money; and that he, himself, is a partial failure. He is right. As far as his life is concerned, the country is going to the dogs. The church is spending too much money in proportion to what he is getting out of it. He is a partial failure even though he may not publicly admit it. He is constantly dogged by that pessimistic outlook. His faith has become supplanted by sin and doubt. Too often in the history of our religious life we not only see such people, but we are tempted to become such people ourselves. That is one of the tragedies of religion. But religion has a triumph also. That is in its optimism—its concern with heaven; its affirmation of faith; its perception of good even in the worst of human beings; the recognition government is improving; that the church should enlarge the scope of its benefits; that individuals like you and me are abounding in grace by thanksgiving.

I have studied the concordances which show the word frequency of various words used in the Holy Scriptures. Occasionally one will find the word "thanks" or "thanksgiving" in the Old Testament, the Koran, the Bahava Gita, and other sacred literature of world religions. But nowhere will you find the word used as frequently as in the New Testament. Apparently Christians abound in *thanksgiving*. It was to this effect that Paul wrote a letter to the Colossians in which he expressed his regret that he had not been able to get to see them and so he wrote them an epistle exhorting them to a few prime essentials of the faith. In several places he says things like this, "As ye have therefore received Jesus Christ the Lord, so walk ye in him . . . established in the faith as ye have been taught *abounding therein with thanksgiving*." And then in another place he says about prayer, "Continue in prayer and watch . . . with *thanksgiving*." Again and again and again the word thanksgiving comes into the letters of Paul and the gospels of our Lord. Thanksgiving seems to be one of the main staples of balanced Christian diet.

ALWAYS THANKFUL

Indeed, whenever I think of any of the great or lesser saints of Christianity, the word "thanksgiving" comes into mind. I suppose if any man had occasion to consider his lot in life as heaping over with tragic adversities it was St. Francis of Assissi. He left a prosperous home to marry poverty. Misunderstood and set upon, he and his followers seemed destined to gloomy graves but always at the last minute something would come through. They were always cheerful, always giving thanks. Then I remember a lesser saint, a preacher with very few of this world's goods who had had sickness leaving him sorely in debt. A destitute family knocked upon his door. He cared for them and sent them on their way with the last money that he had in his pocket. What he said when they left will ever be a lesson: "I thank God that you came to me so that I might have the privilege of being of some small help. Thank you so much for coming." It taught me a lesson. When people give you the privilege of helping them they are giving you the privilege of becoming like God and indeed you owe thanks to God for the opportunity.

It was just such an insight into the opportunity of sharing with the divine that led our early Pilgrim forefathers to establish on the rock-bound coast of New England the Festival of Thanksgiving at the dreariest time of the year. Their thanks came from their poverty. They had had a desperate struggle to keep from starving and yet they gave thanks to God for blessings and shared them with their Indian neighbors. Had they judged their lot and their neighbors with pessimism instead of the optimism of faith, they might never have survived the months that followed. But instead they "walked in Christ . . . established in the faith and were abounding in thanksgiving."

ART OF APPRECIATION

The high art of appreciation is one of the true indications of a real faith. How do we learn to appreciate? How do we learn to give thanks? How can we abound in thanksgiving? First, let us frankly recognize that there are two sides to every coin. There are two different ways of looking at a situation. One is dark and one is light. A pessimist is a man of doubt who sees the dark. The optimist is a man of faith who sees the light. It is impossible to be truly thankful if you only see the dark. To be truly appreciative your eye must catch primarily the light. The emulsion on a photographic film knows this. No, it does not catch only the light to the exclusion of the dark, for to do such would be over-exposure. Rather a photographic emulsion on a film catches primarily the light and leaves the dark alone, thereby providing the contrast and revealing a clear picture. The man of faith is not blind to the sins of this world, its suffering and pain. Rather it is on such a background of sin and suffering that he is able to perceive the blessings of God and give thanks. Any true appreciation sees that there is a light and a dark side, but chooses the light.

A man had unusual success in business. Commenting on it, one of the bankers in the town said, "He had the ability to get phenomenal results out of mediocre people." I inquired further into the matter. No, he didn't provide bonuses nor fancy presents, but he was forever grateful, truly, sincerely grateful and appreciative of what his people did. There wasn't an employee in the place who hadn't, at one time or another, been the recipient of his appreciation. The man was a true Christian abounding in thanksgiving.

HUMBLING TIME

A second thing which we should know if we are to learn how to give thanks is that thanksgiving is not a matter of giving thanks *if* you get what you want. You can't bargain with God, thanking him if he gives you the blessing you desire. And in the long run you can never bargain with man. You may think you do, but you delude yourself. None of us can ever repay for the heritage we have received from our forefathers. Could a single person here repay what has been given him in education? Could one of us, with only what we alone possess, pay for one electric light bulb? No, we are the recipients of a million years of exploration into the mysteries of science. We can't pay for what we have received in mind or heart or body. We couldn't pay man, much less God. So when you go to church, remember your contribution in the offering plate is a paltry sum in comparison to what God has given you. The most that you can ever do is to give thanks, contribute your small amount of time and energy and money by thanksgiving into the vast blessings that a new generation will receive. As one man said to me, "Thanksgiving is a humbling time." It is indeed humbling to recognize that we can never repay the blessings we have received and that we can only give most humble thanks.

A third thing in learning how to give anks is to give thanks abundantly. Too ten we are niggardly with our thanks. ast week a fellow minister told me of one his members who was always thanking m for a "wonderful sermon." Then one nday the place of the sermon was taken a pageant. As the woman came out of urch to shake the minister's hand she said, thank you, sir, for a wonderful sermon." inking that her effusiveness was only a bit he reminded her that he hadn't eached that morning. Her quick response was, "Don't you realize, pastor, that your mere presence is a sermon?"

Though it is true that some people are over effusive with their flattery to your face while sticking a knife into your back, true thankfulness is not enriched by the rarity of its usage. It is enriched rather by its authentic and frequent usage. And the more frequently you use it the more quickly you learn its many facets of rare beauty. So, therefore, be established in faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein in thanksgiving.

ilgrims of Today

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The immortal eleventh chapter of ebrews, the roll call of the heroes, in the irteenth verse, speaks of "strangers and ilgrims on the earth." It is a verse worth membering—"These all died in faith, not aving received the promises, but having en them afar off, and were persuaded of nem, and embraced them, and confessed that ney were strangers and pilgrims on the arth—wherefore God is not ashamed to be alled their God." The last thought comes a w verses later in this chapter, but it is lated to the thought of being pilgrims and rangers. Those of whom God is not asham- d are those who are seeking a better coun- y, that is—an heavenly!

Surely, the Pilgrim Fathers stood in the ng line of those of whom God is not asham- d. They joined the great adventure of seek- g a better country!

It is great to honor the Pilgrims of 1620 nd their ideals of liberty, the right to orship, the sanctity of the home, the town eeting, the open Bible, and the meeting ouse where a man came to acknowledge his dependence upon God and to give thanks for Divine Guidance. But, primarily, we are inking of the pilgrims of today and those ho continue on in their spirit, those of hom God need not be ashamed in our day.

SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE

First, may we note that, as the Pilgrims ame together for their Day of Thanksgiv- ng, it was primarily in the spirit of *grati- ude*. Gratitude is an emotion that is not easy o capture unless we truly feel a sense of hankfulness. There's something that seems nreal about having a special Day of Thanks- iving, for it should be an integral part of he daily experience of every life!

The pilgrims of this and every day have sensed the reality of the spiritual world, the glory of life, the beauty and love that impinges upon life in so many ways, and have simply desired, out of the gratitude of their hearts, to thank God for his unsearchable riches. Always, at Thanksgiving time, I recall Robert Louis Stevenson's word: "Keep your eyes open to your mercies. That side of piety is eternal. The man who has forgotten to be thankful has fallen asleep in life!"

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

There is little of comparison between what we have and what the Pilgrims had. In imagination, retrace your steps across the three hundred and some years to that first gallant company of pilgrims. On the Mayflower, before it left England, Robert Cushman wrote an immortal letter: "If ever we make a plantation, God works a miracle! Especially considering how scant we shall be of vitals, and, most of all, ununited amongst ourselves.

"If I should write you of all things that promiscuously forerun our ruin, I should over-charge my weak head and grieve your tender heart: Only this I pray you, prepare for evil tidings of us, every day! But pray for us instantly! I see not, in reason, how we shall escape. But God can do much, and His Will be done."

I remember the thrill that was mine when I first stood beside little Plymouth Rock and thought of the courage and faith that was woven into the story of The Mayflower. Mary Chilton, a Pilgrim lass, was the first to put her foot upon American soil as the boat from the Mayflower made its way to the New England shore. How uninviting, hard, cruel, and cold it must have seemed to them that day; and, yet, how they flung themselves from their boat, knelt down on the

ground, lifted their hands in prayer to God in Thanksgiving, invoking a petition for strength, imploring God for courage.

It is impossible to recapture such a spirit by simply having a Day of Thanksgiving. It comes only through a response and an inner spirit with spiritual reception keen enough to sense the guidance and reality of God in spite of hardship, difficulty, or setback—whatever life may bring! How foolish it is to talk of honoring the Pilgrims of yesterday for their spirit unless the pilgrims of today also have, in their heart, the same sense of perception and spirit of gratitude for all that the Lord hath done. No, the first Pilgrims were not grateful for things, for their frugal harvest and bleak environment gave them little over which they might pray; but, inwardly, in their hearts, they did rejoice for the guidance of God!

DAY OF HOPE

We cannot forget that the first Thanksgiving Day was also celebrated with *hope.* They had enough to carry through the hard New England winter. They had made a footing on the new land and they knew that, here, a new nation could be built. It was the celebration of the joy in their knowledge that they were more than adequate, in spite of hardships, to overcome and to survive. Thanksgiving Day has always carried that spirit as confidently as an army carries a banner. The world always needs the emphasis of the Thanksgiving Hope! It is a trust, a confident belief that this nation, under God, shall live and serve this present day. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." This is the true spirit of hope!

It is so easy to lose hope in life's goodness, the providence of God, or in the thought that ideals of Christian love and brotherhood will ever hold the triumphant sway over the hearts of men.

It is the modern tempo and vogue to belittle the attitude of hope. To many, it smacks of optimism; and, in the face of the many setbacks our race and day has endured, the sophisticated does not wish to be caught off third base in any optimistic approach toward home plate if the peace-planners pop out to short center field.

But isn't the Christian the realist who looks facts in the face and then senses another factor that the pessimist overlooks? The Christian realist senses God, with greater plans and greater dreams than man has even imagined, in the unfolding story of life. So his hope is not based upon an idle fancy or an empty dream. He bases his hope on his conviction of God and his certain belief in the eternal value and dignity of every life.

GOD OUR REFUGE

The man of Christian hope, even when the storm clouds seem to have no rift and when the horizon is banked with darkness, bases his hope upon the certainty that "the Eternal God is our refuge; and underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

The shallow optimist may believe that everything will come out all right regardless of what he does. But the Christian optimist knows that things may be made to "work together for good to all those who love the Lord." He recognizes, however, that, even at the heart of redemptive love, there was a cruel Cross. It was out of the background of suffering, shipwreck, being beaten, and being thrown in jail that Paul knew there was a Power in life that would never let him down. He exclaimed, "I am persuaded that, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us; that neither life nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature shall ever be able to separate us from the Love of God that was in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Martin Luther once said: "Everything that is done in the world is done by hope. No husbandman would sow one grain of corn if he hoped not it would grow and become seed."

During this Thanksgiving Season, we think of how our reasons for hope have been undergirded across the years. Now we have the strength, dreams, and power of America backing up the hopes and prayers of these Pilgrim Fathers. Many a student puts his hope in science and the new day and the gifts that science, in the past and in the future, may bring. Many a sufferer keeps hope alive through the belief that science and medicine will find some new cure. Older people look ahead with a sense of hope, with social security plans, health insurance, and old-age pensions to help them, at least, take care of the comfort-side of the sunset years.

But in spite of these strong supports for hope, the ultimate hope must go back to that upon which the Pilgrim Fathers rested their faith. Only a religious hope, with its belief that man as a spiritual being will have power to control the material gifts of science or discovery, truly has any adequate basis for

hope. So millions today are seeking an adequate religious faith. It is the basis of our hope and our conviction though that

Right forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne;
Yet, that scaffold sways the future
And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadows
Keeping watch o'er His own.

Such is the basis of our undying hope!

DAY OF SHARING

We also will make a further discovery as we go back to the first Thanksgiving feast, for there were guests who shared in the frugal Pilgrim fare. Chief Massasoit and the Indians came to *share* in the fellowship and spirit of the day.

Traditionally, at Thanksgiving time we think of the *generous spirit* that is so much a part of our Christian thinking and life.

Usually we think of what our gifts do for others. When I was a young boy, a missionary who had returned from China spoke of the tremendous change that came into the life of the people through the Message of Christ. I made the startling discovery that, always, those who were investing their life in some great enterprise also seemed vitally alive.

Across the years, I have noted that the ones who truly live do so through a generous spirit and the outpouring of life! Make no mistake about it, a gift is needed for the world need; but, more, it does something to the individual! It makes him become vitally alive as he truly shares from a genuine spirit of life. Thomas Carlyle said: "Life is not a thought, however noble. Life is an *action.*" Christianity is not a thought, however noble; it is a life gloriously lived!

Albert Schweitzer has done much for Africa, but Africa also has done much for Albert Schweitzer. As he has given of his service and life, the conscious Presence of Christ has become so much a part of his thinking and living that when many think of a truly fine Christian in our day their minds turn to this ambassador for Christ.

PRACTICE KINDNESS

There is so much hate and heartbreak in our world today that the least that anyone can do is simply to practice humankindness and to reveal Christian love! If our Christian compassion fails us now, this world hasn't very much of a civilization to hold it together. Recognizing this, there has been a resurgence in the spirit of neighborliness and in the act of sharing.

It is in this spirit that we, too, are privileged to join the company of the strangers and pilgrims on earth of whom our God is not ashamed! For, it is only as we share of our gifts in our life that we join those who seek the City of our God by building it here, day by day, through their life.

What we work for and share in, we come to love, as we feel we have a vital investment in it; and then, we recognize that God also has a vital investment in our own life!

DAY OF WORSHIP

And finally the early New Englanders made it a *Day of Worship.* They knew in Whom they believed. In His Power, they crossed the stormy sea. His Spirit was their guide. Through sickness, privation, and hardship, they remained steadfast in their faith. They knew what it meant to worship in difficult days. The darker the outlook, the more they realized the need of the uplook and the closer God seemed to them. No wonder they laid the foundations of a nation that has endured throughout the years. They knew how to worship! It was here the Pilgrim character was fully revealed.

The late Dr. Francis Peabody, when Dean of the College at Harvard, said that the most permanent bequest of the Pilgrims was their *character!* He goes on to state that we have misunderstood the Pilgrim character. One of the most striking aspects of the Plymouth Colony was its persistent opposition to the spirit of Puritanism. No Quaker was put to death at Plymouth; no witch was executed there. "No act, imposition, law, or ordinance," it was announced in 1633, "which shall be made or imposed upon us at the present or to come, but such as shall be made by consent of the body of their associates." No government or ecclesiastical autocracy dictated to the Pilgrim Colony. Roger Williams had freedom of speech. At the Lord's Table gathered Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Dutch Calvinists. It was a fellowship in which all might truly worship.

They believed strongly in the democratic way and in their town meeting laid the foundation of our new government. The Pilgrim character was wrought out of their simple and genuine belief in God!

It was in their worship service that the early Pilgrim Fathers recognized the pressure of God's life upon theirs. Through the reading of the Bible, they recognized God's Truth as the Living Word. In the life of prayer, they sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Through the Word spoken in the

worship service, they sensed the Love of God for their life.

By no stretch of imagination can we believe that the early Pilgrim Fathers always appreciated the long service of worship! In the snow and rain, they walked to the little meeting house. It would be a cold place in which to worship, and the crude benches must have been uncomfortable. But they belonged to God; and so, they came to worship God and to express their love for him. Their religion was vital and real. This was the spirit which laid the foundation for our American way of life. We who are charged with the continual building of the life of our land cannot truly labor with any other spirit than that of the "pilgrims and strangers who sought for a better country wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God!"